

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Funding Opportunity

F25AS00288 FY 2025 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Traditional
Conservation Grants Program Region 4

Funding Opportunity Number

F25AS00288

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BASIC INFORMATION

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: F25AS00288

Assistance Listing Number(s): 15.615

Estimated Total Program Funding: \$3,366,779

Expected Number of Awards: 75

Award Ceiling: \$3,366,779

Award Floor: \$1,000

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) expects to award an estimated \$3,366,779 through this Funding Opportunity pending final fiscal year (FY) 2025 allocations.

Cost Sharing Required?

Yes

Closing Date Explanation

Electronically submitted applications must be submitted no later than 11:59 PM, ET, on the listed application due date.

U.S. states and local governments may be required under [Executive Order 12372](#), [Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs](#) to submit their application to their State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for review. For more information, see the [Intergovernmental Review SPOC List](#).

OMB Control Number: [1018-0100](#)

Have Questions?

For additional information about this Funding Opportunity, please contact Victoria Davis at 404-679-4176 or victoria_davis@fws.gov.

Executive Summary

The principal objective of the Traditional Conservation Grant Program is to support the development and implementation of State and Territorial (hereafter, “State”) programs to conserve and recover threatened and endangered species under FWS jurisdiction. Financial assistance, provided in the form of grants, can be used to support projects that have direct benefits for federally listed species, candidate and eligible unlisted species, and recently delisted species. States may apply for funding to conduct conservation work on federally listed resident species that are included in the State’s cooperative agreement. States may also apply for funding to monitor candidate, eligible unlisted, and recently delisted species. Projects proposed for funding may involve management, research, monitoring, and outreach activities or any combination thereof. Applications should include clear and specific information about how the proposed work would contribute to species recovery or prevent the need to list a species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Successful applications will be those that clearly demonstrate a direct benefit to the species or its habitat.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

State governments

Additional Information on Eligibility

- Only State agencies that have entered into a cooperative agreement with FWS pursuant to section 6(c) of the ESA or enters into/reconfirms such an agreement within 30 days of the

application deadline are eligible to apply under this Funding Opportunity. FWS requires a complete, signed cooperative agreement before it can obligate Federal funds to a project [50 CFR 81.3, 50 CFR 81.5, 43 CFR 12.50(b)(3)]. While funding can only be granted to States, individuals or groups (for example counties or conservation organizations) may work with a State agency that has a cooperative agreement on conservation efforts that are mutually beneficial, as a subgrantee.

- To be eligible for consideration, applicants must seek funding to conduct conservation work on federally listed resident species currently included in the State's section 6 cooperative agreement. States may also apply for funding to monitor any species that has become a candidate or eligible unlisted species by the application deadline or has been delisted due to recovery within the last five years.
- Projects must involve voluntary conservation efforts within the United States. Projects within a grant must be consistent with approved or draft species recovery plans. In no case will proposed work be in conflict with approved recovery plans [50 CFR 81.2].
- A permit from the Regional Director may be required if a project within a grant involves taking, transporting across State lines, introduction into an area beyond its historical range, or holding wildlife in captivity for more than 45 days. If you anticipate any of these activities, you must submit an Environmental Assessment to the Regional Director before we will grant a permit [50 CFR 81.9, 43 CFR 12.50(b)(3)].
- Neither the Federal funds awarded through this Funding Opportunity, nor the associated non-Federal cost share, may be used to satisfy regulatory requirements of the ESA, including complying with a biological opinion under section 7, fulfilling Federal mitigation, minimization, and/or monitoring requirements of a habitat conservation plan permitted under section 10, or any other Federal regulatory mitigation requirement (e.g., mitigation for Clean Water Act permits).
- An application cannot include FWS Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) costs.
- State administrative costs must either be assumed by the State or included in the proposal in accordance with Federal requirements.
- Generally, only expenses incurred and budgeted during the period of performance are reimbursable; the period of performance begins with the effective date established at the time the grant is approved. However, a State may request reimbursement of pre-award costs for certain necessary expenses detailed in the grant application. Pre-award costs are those incurred prior to the approval of the grant where such costs are necessary to comply with the proposed period of performance. Such costs are allowable only if the grant is awarded, only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the award, and only with the written approval of the awarding agency (2 CFR 200.458).
- Applications may address new or ongoing species conservation work. Projects supporting ongoing work in which the scope, objectives, and expected outcomes remain consistent over time are considered continuation projects. Applications for continuation projects must include a brief discussion of accomplishments to date and a justification for the continuation in the Project Narrative.
- Land acquisition is not eligible for consideration under this Funding Opportunity.

Cost Sharing Requirement

Cost Sharing Required?

Yes

In accordance with section 6(d) of the ESA, the minimum non-Federal cost share is 25 percent of the total project cost, i.e., the amount requested from the program plus the amount of non-Federal cost share. Other funds related to the project, but not designated as cost share, should not be included in the total project costs when calculating minimum non-Federal cost share.

If an application involves the collaboration of two or more States, the minimum non-Federal cost share decreases to 10 percent of the total project cost. The application and budget must reflect the work and responsibilities to be carried out by each of the cooperating States. The source(s) of the non-Federal cost share is up to the applicants and may come from more than one source. Each cooperating State is responsible for submitting performance and financial reports related to the joint project. Incomplete work by any one of the cooperating States may result in recovery of Federal funds from all States, if it is determined that the joint cooperative objective will not be accomplished.

In accordance with [48 United States Code \(U.S.C.\) 1469\(a\), Amendment of Subsection \(d\)](#), the required match is waived for each grant awarded to the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Non-Federal cost share requirements are detailed in 50 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 81.8(b) and allow the cost share to be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions, in accordance with the regulations at 2 CFR 200.306. Applications must identify the appropriate minimum non-Federal cost share in the standard form (SF)-424 Budget Information form and in the budget narrative.

GET READY TO APPLY

Required System Registrations

Unique Entity Identifier and SAM.gov Registration

Before applying, all **applicants** except individuals applying as a natural person **must be registered in SAM.gov**. During the SAM.gov registration the entity will obtain their Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

The SAM.gov registration process can take several months. If your organization is not already registered in SAM.gov, begin the registration process as soon as possible.

To register in SAM.gov, go to the [SAM.gov website](#) and use the available resources to complete registration.

- **Financial assistance registrants** must review and certify compliance with the SAM.gov “Financial Assistance General Representations and Certifications”.
- **Already registered?** You already have a Unique Entity ID. Before applying, check that your “Financial Assistance General Representations and Certifications” on SAM.gov is complete. Remember to renew your registration every year to keep it active while you

have an award or application in progress. You can update your registration whenever you need, including during renewal.

- **Need help?** For additional information and contact information on the [SAM.gov Help page](#).

GRANTSOLUTIONS

This program accepts applications through GrantSolutions.gov. You must register with GrantSolutions. See [Submission Instructions](#).

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Goals

- The primary goal of this program is to implement high-priority recovery actions for ESA-listed species by funding eligible activities that will have a direct impact on species recovery, prevent the extinction of listed species, or prevent the need to list species under the ESA.

Program Description

As many species listed as endangered or threatened under the ESA spend at least part of their life cycle on non-Federal lands, FWS recognizes success in conserving and recovering these species depends largely on working cooperatively with States and Territories.

Section 6 of the ESA authorizes the Secretary of Interior to enter into cooperative agreements with States that establish and maintain an "adequate and active" program for the conservation of threatened and endangered species of fish, wildlife, and plants that are resident in the States. A cooperative agreement sets forth the roles and responsibilities of the State and the FWS in the management of threatened and endangered species. Once a State enters into such an agreement, the FWS is authorized to provide Federal financial assistance for the implementation of a State's conservation program, through the Traditional Conservation Grant Program.

The principal objective of the Traditional Conservation Grant Program is to support the development and implementation of States' programs to conserve and recover threatened and endangered species under FWS jurisdiction. Financial assistance, provided in the form of competitive grants, can be used to support projects that have direct benefits for federally listed species, candidate and eligible unlisted species, and recently delisted species. States may apply for funding to conduct conservation work on federally listed resident species that are included in the State's cooperative agreement. States may also apply for funding to monitor candidate, eligible unlisted, and recently delisted species. [Candidate Species](#) are those that the FWS determined warrant listing as a threatened or endangered species, but the listing is precluded by other higher priority actions. For the purposes of this Funding Opportunity, we are considering certain eligible unlisted species in addition to Candidate Species: 1) those species that are the subject of a positive 90-day finding, 2) species that are the subject of a positive 12-month finding but not yet the subject of a proposed rule, 3) species that are subject of a proposed listing rule but not a final rule, and 4) species included on the National Listing Workplan. A full list of unlisted species qualifying as eligible at the time of this Funding Opportunity's posting can be found as an attachment. Further, for purposes of this Funding Opportunity, recently delisted species are those species delisted within the past five years. Only species delisted due to recovery may

receive funding under this Funding Opportunity. A list of all delisted species and the year delisted is available at the [ECOS Delisted Species page](#).

Projects proposed for funding may involve management, research, monitoring, and outreach activities or any combination thereof. Applications should include clear and specific information about how the proposed work would contribute to species recovery or prevent the need to list a species under the ESA. Successful applications will be those that clearly demonstrate a direct benefit to the species or its habitat.

Eligible activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Enhancement or restoration of habitat
- Surveys and inventories of habitats
- Species status surveys
- Propagation of animals and plants
- Research such as genetic analysis to determine genetic health and population structure
- Public education and outreach tools such as website development or coordination workshops with local landowners to address a specific threat to a species
- Monitoring of candidate, eligible unlisted, and recently delisted (recovered) species

The general program funding priorities for Traditional Conservation Grants address the listing status of the species and implementation of actions identified in a final or draft recovery plan, Recovery Implementation Strategy (RIS), recovery outline, or similar conservation or management strategy.

Highest priority is given to projects designed to have a direct impact on the recovery of listed species, prevent extinction of a listed species or prevent the need to list a species. Applications to monitor candidate, eligible unlisted, and recently delisted species may be addressed even though no recovery plan exists. Applications that involve only research must provide information that can be directly used to prevent listing, recover, manage, or improve current management strategies for a species. Applications involving only public education and outreach activities must demonstrate a high probability of improving or increasing public understanding of and participation in conservation activities.

Certified Local Governments are encouraged to prioritize projects in support of the celebration of America's 250th birthday (American250). This may include, but is not limited to, preservation planning, interpretation, public engagement, and rehabilitation projects that recognize and honor the nation's founding, history, and cultural heritage.

Legislative Authority

16 U.S.C. §1535

Type of Award

Projects will be funded through G (Grant).

PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION

Application Content and Format

Pre-Application Requirements

Prior to applying, applicants should review presidential actions found at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/> and DOI Secretary's Orders found at: <https://www.doi.gov/document-library/secretary-order>. By applying in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity, the applicant certifies awareness and compliance with all currently effective and applicable executive orders and secretary's orders, including but not limited to the Executive Order titled Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing as well as the Executive Order and Secretary's order titled Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History. Applicants are responsible for ensuring their proposed activities are consistent with the intent and requirements of these directives.

Application Documents

Applicants must submit the following forms with their application as specified below. Instructions for accessing and submitting application forms are provided in the [Submission Instructions](#) section of this document below. For instructions on completing form fields, see the form instructions on the [Grants.gov Forms Repository](#).

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement
SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance Note: For applicants requesting more than \$100,000 in Federal funds, the Authorized Representative's signature (or electronic equivalent) on the Application for Federal Assistance form also represents their certification of the statements in Appendix A to 43 CFR 18-Certification Regarding Lobbying	Required from all applicants
SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs	Required for non-construction projects
SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	Required if requesting more than \$100,000 in Federal funds <u>and</u> the applicant has used or plans to use funds other than Federal appropriated funds for lobbying related to the proposed project.
Project Abstract Summary (OMB 4040-0019). Must include, in plain language: • Award purpose, • Activities to be performed, • Expected deliverables or outcomes, • Intended beneficiaries, Subrecipient activities (if known or specified at time of award)	Required from all applicants

Project Narrative

The project narrative must contain each of the elements listed below. Narratives that clearly address all stated eligibility and evaluation criteria in an organized manner will facilitate application review and scoring.

- ***Project Title;***
- ***Description of entity(ies) undertaking the project;***
- ***Statement of Need***
 - Explain why the project is necessary and how it fulfills the purposes of the Traditional Conservation Grant program.
 - A need statement will identify the conservation issue, problem or opportunity to be addressed.
 - A need statement will provide evidence such as results from surveys, research or other data to demonstrate that the need is real and not perceived.
 - A need statement will identify the negative result of taking no action.
- ***Purpose***
 - Describe the desired future state that addresses the need in whole or part.
- ***Objectives***
 - Objectives state the desired outcome of the proposed project in terms that are specific and quantified.
 - Objectives are meant to be realistic targets or benchmarks that, if achieved, will resolve the project need.
 - Objectives are written in an active tense and use action verbs such as construct, survey, train, research, establish, repair, conduct, provide, etc.
- ***Methods/Approach***
 - Describes the methods used to achieve the stated objectives.
 - Approach describes the specific conservation actions or efforts necessary to accomplish project objectives.
 - Approach answers the question of “how” the objectives will be accomplished by describing the actual work that will be done.
 - Approach will demonstrate that the agency will use sound design, appropriate procedures, and accepted fish and wildlife conservation, management, or research principles.
 - Any deliverables resulting from the funding should be noted in this section.
- ***Timetable or milestones***
 - Describe significant milestones in completing the project and any accomplishments to date.
- ***Information to support environmental compliance review requirements***
 - FWS has the responsibility for making the final determination regarding compliance with Federal laws.
 - National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – provide any information that may be relevant to compliance with NEPA.
 - Endangered Species Act (ESA) – provide any information that may be relevant to compliance with the ESA.

- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) – provide any information that may be relevant to compliance with NHPA, such as locations of historic or cultural properties.
- Other Permits – list and provide the current status of any other required Federal permits
- ***Information on key project personnel***
 - Principal investigator (Research)
 - Recipient project lead
- ***Project Location***
 - Provide a general description of where the work will be conducted.
- ***Continuation Projects Only***
 - Include a brief discussion of accomplishments to date and a justification for the continuation of work.

Budget Narrative

Applicants must describe and justify items and costs listed in their budget. The budget narrative must identify the following cost items: total estimated costs, non-Federal cost share, third-party contributions, and any pre-award costs. Total project cost is the sum of all allowable costs, including required and voluntary cost share and third-party contributions.

Budget items must be:

- Reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary
- Compliant with [2 CFR §200 Subpart E](#) cost principles

Indirect Costs: Applicants must indicate in their budget narrative how they will charge indirect costs, including the rate to be applied:

- De Minimis Rate: If eligible, state if your organization is opting to use the de minimis rate of up to 15% of total modified direct costs. Entities that do not have a current Federal negotiated indirect cost rate (including provisional rate) may propose to use the de minimis rate. For more information, refer to [2 CFR 200.414\(f\)](#).
- Negotiated Rate: State if you will negotiate with your cognizant agency. If your organization has previously negotiated a rate, attach a copy of the most recently negotiated rate agreement (active or expired).

Data and Evaluation Costs: Applicant budgets may include costs related to data and evaluation as relevant per 2 CFR §200.455.

Costs related to data and evaluation are allowable. Data costs include (but are not limited to) the expenditures needed to gather, store, track, manage, analyze, disaggregate, secure, share, publish, or otherwise use data to administer or improve your project or program. Examples include data systems or dashboards. Data costs may also include direct or indirect costs associated with building integrated data systems, including those that link individual-level data from multiple fish and wildlife agencies for purposes of management, research, and evaluation. Evaluation costs include (but are not limited to) evidence reviews, evaluation planning and feasibility assessment, conducting evaluations, sharing evaluation results, and other personnel or materials costs related to the effective building and use of evidence and evaluation for program design, administration, or improvement.

Budget narratives must be sufficiently detailed to show that the project is cost effective and that costs are both necessary and reasonable for accomplishing the purposes of the proposal. Indicate whether partial funding of the project is practicable and, if so, what specific portion(s) of the project could be implemented with what level of funding. The budget narrative should provide sufficient detail for reviewers to understand how costs were estimated. Reviewers must be able to clearly see that costs are realistic and are commensurate with the project needs and timeframe. Applications will be disqualified if reviewers cannot determine that applications meet this threshold.

Conflict of Interest and Unresolved Matters Disclosures:

If any actual or potential conflict of interest exists related to this project at the time of application, the applicant must provide sufficient information to support a program determination of significance per [2 CFR 1402.112](#). Refer to [2 CFR 200.112](#) Conflict of Interest and [2 CFR 200.113](#).

Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement:

Applicants must state in their application if the activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel proposed in this application overlap with those in any other Federal proposal or award or not. If no overlap exists, include a statement to that effect. If any overlap exists, provide:

- Activities: Description any overlapping activities.
- Costs: Description of any overlapping costs.
- Time: Description of any overlapping key personnel time.
- A copy of any overlapping or duplicative proposal submitted to any other potential funding entity.
- Details on when any overlapping proposal was submitted, to whom, and the expected date of the funding decision.

Other Required Information

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

Address to Request Application Package

Applicants can request application packages through the contact listed above in the Basic Information section. Information on CESCO grants is also available from the Division of Budget & Technical Support, Ecological Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS:ES Falls Church, VA 22041-3803, or electronically at <https://www.fws.gov/program/cooperative-endangered-species-conservation-fund>.

Submission Dates and Times

Closing Date for Applications: 12/05/2025

Closing Date Explanation

Electronically submitted applications must be submitted no later than 11:59 PM, ET, on the listed application due date.

Submission Instructions

Apply Through GrantSolutions

To apply through [GrantSolutions](#), follow these steps:

1. **Register your organization.** Send an e-mail to help@grantsolutions.gov with:
 - Subject: New Organization Request
 - Entity name (organization or individual applying as a natural person)
 - Entity type
 - SAM.gov Unique Entity Identifier (not required for individuals)
 - Employer Identification Number (individuals, do not include your SSN)
 - Address
 - Contact details (First and last name, e-mail, phone)This information should be the same as entered on the entity's SAM.gov profile.
2. **Assign system user roles.** Follow the [GrantSolutions "Recipient user" registration instructions](#). Submit a separate Recipient User Account Request form for each official to be assigned a system role. At minimum, the Authorizing Official (ADO) and Principal Investigator/Program Director (PI/PD) must be assigned.
3. **Log in.** GrantSolutions requires users to log in through Login.gov. Each user must create a [Login.gov](#) account. For instructions, see the [GrantSolutions Training Resources web page](#).
4. **Find and apply to this Funding Opportunity.** After logging in, click on either the "Begin an application" link (first time applicants) or the "Funding Opportunity" link to go to the "Competing Announcements-Application Kits" list screen. Search the list for this Funding Opportunity's title and number. Click on the associated "Apply" link. Follow the prompts from there. Required applications forms are provided with the Funding Opportunity in GrantSolutions unless otherwise indicated on the Required Forms table above.
5. For detailed instructions, see the [GrantSolutions Training Resources web page](#).
6. **Need help?** Find help topics and contact information on the [GrantSolutions Contact Us page](#).

APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Eligibility Review

During the eligibility review, the application is checked for timely submission, completed packages (see [Application Documents](#) above) and alignment with the requirements of this announcement. The Federal agency may remove an application if it does not pass the eligibility review.

Prior to conducting the comprehensive merit review, an initial review will be performed to determine whether: (1) the applicant is eligible for an award; (2) the information required by the NOFO has been submitted; (3) all mandatory requirements of the NOFO are satisfied; (4) the proposed project is responsive to the program objectives of the NOFO (program determination); and (5) the proposed project is in compliance with all applicable executive and secretary orders, including the President's executive order on Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI

Programs and Preferencing as well as the executive order and Secretary order on Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History. If an applicant fails to meet the requirements or objectives of the NOFO, or does not provide sufficient information for review, the applicant will be considered nonresponsive and eliminated from further review.

States are strongly encouraged to confer with the program contact on potential projects prior to applying. Coordinating and communicating early and often will enable both the States and FWS to ensure mutual priorities are addressed when awarding these funds.

Applications will be accepted and continually reviewed during the open period for this Funding Opportunity or as long as funds are available.

Initial Screening for Eligibility

A. Status of Cooperative Agreement: Only State agencies that have entered into a cooperative agreement with FWS pursuant to section 6(c) of the ESA or enters into/reconfirms such an agreement within 30 days of the application deadline are eligible to apply under this Funding Opportunity

B. Completeness and Eligibility: Applications will be screened to ensure that application packages have all required forms, application elements, and meet all eligibility criteria. FWS will review the SAM.gov Exclusion database, status of applicants' administration of other grants, including Single Audit submissions, past performance, financial strength and management capabilities, and procedures and methods for monitoring subrecipients or vendors. Applicants in poor standing may not be considered for funding. If there are any questions about the ability of the project to be completed in compliance with Federal laws and regulations, additional information may be requested from the applicant. A project may be disqualified if FWS staff determine the project cannot meet Federal requirements. Incomplete applications will be returned for corrections. Corrections must be submitted within two weeks of the returned application. Applicants that do not respond within two weeks with corrected materials will be disqualified. FWS, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured.

If an applicant selected for funding hasn't finished their SAM.gov registration (see [2 CFR 25.200](#) and [2 CFR 25.110](#)) when the federal agency is ready to make an award, we may decide that the applicant is ineligible for the award and choose to grant it to someone else. Please refer [2 CFR 25.205](#) for more information.

Prior to making an award, the DOI checks the anticipated recipient and their key project personnel against the current list of prohibited or restricted persons or entities in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) Exclusions database. We are prohibited from making an award if a recipient or any key personnel are found ineligible, prohibited, restricted, or otherwise excluded from receiving or participating in an award, as their ineligibility condition applies to this program.

If removed from consideration for ineligibility, the Federal agency will notify the applicant in writing.

Merit Review

After initial screening, applications meeting the basic eligibility requirements will undergo merit review based on the criteria outlined below. Each application will be reviewed, evaluated, and scored independently by Regional staff with appropriate subject-matter expertise (e.g., species recovery, candidate conservation, ESA policy and programs, Federal financial assistance). Reviewers may discuss individual applications but not all scoring will be based on consensus. The reviewers' scores will be averaged and used to produce a rank order of the applications for consideration by the Regional Director.

1. Species Listing Status and Implementation of High Priority Recovery Actions	Maximum Points: 35
A. The listing status of the species. Federally listed species will be prioritized. Applications to monitor candidate, eligible unlisted, and recently delisted species will be a lower priority for consideration. <i>Scoring</i> = 5- 20 points, where, for example, 5 =recently delisted species, 10 =candidate or eligible unlisted species, 15 =threatened species, 20 =endangered species. B. Whether or not the project will accomplish actions identified in a final or draft Recovery Plan, Recovery Outline, or similar conservation strategy or management plan, or recovery activities in a Recovery Implementation Strategy (RIS). Applications addressing listed species for which FWS has released a draft or final Recovery Plan and RIS should indicate how the project would address one or more of the recovery actions or activities identified and what priority level the actions are assigned. If a species does not have an approved recovery plan in place, the proposed activities should be described in the recovery outline, 5-year review recommendations, post-delisting monitoring plan, or other conservation or management plan for the species. <i>Scoring</i> = 0- 15 points, where, for example, 0 =no contribution to identified actions, 7= contributes to an identified action but additional projects are necessary to complete the action, 15=completes an identified action.	
2. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of the Application to the Program Goals	Maximum Points: 35
Reviewers will consider whether applications clearly identify project goals and objectives and whether those goals and objectives are applicable to conservation and recovery of threatened or endangered species, candidate or eligible unlisted species, or delisted species as specified in previous sections of this document. Reviewers will consider whether the application is designed to have a direct impact on species recovery as a result of implementation of management actions. If the application addresses the continuation of previously funded or ongoing work, reviewers should consider whether the applicant provides an adequate justification for the continuation of the same work (e.g., what benefit would additional results have?). <i>Scoring:</i> 1- 35 points; where, for example, 1= no importance/relevance to the program goals or	

objectives, very limited potential to contribute to species recovery, no implementation of management actions; 20= moderately important/ relevant, reasonably likely to make some meaningful contribution to species recovery; 35= extremely important/relevant, extremely likely to make a significant contribution to recovery of a threatened or endangered species, involves implementation of significant management actions, addresses a high priority recovery plan action.

3. Technical/ Scientific Merit	Maximum Points: 20
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For applications including management and outreach, this criterion addresses whether the activities and approach described in the project narrative is appropriate for achieving the stated goals and objectives, result in successful execution of the project, and if the anticipated results can be achieved in the timeline specified. Reviewers will consider whether sufficient information is provided to evaluate the design of the project relative to the stated goals/objectives.

For applications including research and monitoring, reviewers will consider the sufficiency of information to evaluate the project technically, the strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to securing productive results, and the use of quality assurance considerations for data collected.

Scoring: 1- 20 points; where, for example, 1 = completely unsound or unlikely to meet the stated objectives, and information insufficient to evaluate project design; 10 = intermediately sound, or reasonably likely to meet the stated objectives; 20 = extremely sound and highly likely to meet the stated objectives.

4. Project Costs	Maximum Points: 10
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Reviewers will evaluate the budget to determine if it is sufficiently detailed, realistic and commensurate with the project needs and timeframe. Reviewers will consider whether sufficient detail was provided to evaluate how costs were estimated.

Scoring: 1- 10 points; where, for example, 1 = unrealistic and lacking sufficient detail; 5 = adequately detailed and realistic; 10 = extremely detailed and realistic.

Review and Selection Process

This program reviews proposed budgets to ensure:

- figures are correct
- estimated costs are necessary and reasonable and clearly linked to project narratives
- avoid obviously unallowable costs
- identify costs requiring prior approval
- ensure indirect cost rates are applied correctly
- confirm cost sharing requirements are reflected in the budget.

This program reviews applications for potential overlap or duplication between the proposed project and any other funded or proposed project. Depending on the circumstances, DOI may choose to not make an award.

Funding for the Traditional Conservation Grants Program is allocated by formula to FWS Regions based on the number of listed species covered by section 6 cooperative agreements with States within that Region.

FWS Region 4: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

Available funds are allocated to States based on the number of species covered by their respective cooperative agreement divided by the total number of species covered by cooperative agreements in the Region. Projects compete at the State level.

Selection by Regional Director

Applications will be selected for funding based on the evaluation of merit review criteria described above unless an application is justified by the Regional Director to be funded based upon the following considerations, where applicable:

- a. State priority
- b. State's ability to use partial funding
 - If a State indicates that a project cannot be completed with partial funding, a lower State priority project within the target-funding amount may be funded instead of a higher priority project.
 - A State may receive less than requested, if an activity identified in the grant has been deemed ineligible, insubstantial, or in conflict with conservation goals. States may be asked to adjust project objectives, tasks, and budgets should an activity be deemed ineligible.
- c. Availability of funding
- d. Matching funds greater than the requirement
- e. Balance/distribution of funds within State or Region
 - Geographically
 - By research areas
 - By project types
 - By species or species groups
- f. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded by FWS or other agencies
- g. Whether a project would be eligible for funding through a more appropriate FWS grant program
- h. Applicant's prior award performance
- i. Partnerships with and/or participation of targeted groups
- j. Adequacy of information necessary for FWS staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to Regional Director

The Regional Director will decide which applications will be forwarded to the FWS Director and Department of Interior (above \$50,000) for final award approval.

FWS may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration of each project proposed for funding will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the State and FWS.

Risk Review

Prior to making an award, the program assesses the risk posed by the applicant per [2 CFR 200.206](#). If an award will be made, the program may apply special conditions corresponding to the risk assessed. For awards over the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$250,000), the program reviews eligibility and financial integrity information in the applicant's SAM.gov records per [2 CFR 200.206\(a\)](#). The program also assesses financial management capabilities, project delivery experience, staffing resources, past performance, administration and reporting compliance records, and overall project complexity and potential challenges.

AWARD NOTICES

Notices of Federal Award are sent electronically via GrantSolutions or e-mail. These notices outline the terms, conditions, and payment instructions per [2 CFR 200.211](#). The Notice of Federal Award signed by an authorized Grants Officer is the legal instrument obligating financial assistance to a recipient. Any other prior notice is not an authorization to begin work. If the program allows pre-award costs per [2 CFR 200.458](#), beginning performance before receiving a Notice of Federal Award is at the applicant's own risk.

Anticipated Project Start Date: 12/05/2025

Anticipated Project End Date: 12/05/2028

Pre-award notifications will be made as early in fiscal year 2025 as possible with the goal of obligating funds within 120 days of pre-award notification. States will assist FWS in meeting the 120-day target by providing the documents necessary for grant issuance as soon as possible following the pre-award notification.

If the application is selected for an award, the FWS Regional Office will notify the applicant of the selection and outline the process for finalizing the award, including any additional information that may be required from the applicant for the satisfactory completion of compliance review. Applicants may be required to revise the project scope and/or budget before a final Notice of Award can be issued. The Notice of Award is the authorizing document for a grant and will be received through GrantSolutions upon completion of all review requirements. Acceptance of an award is defined as starting work, drawing down funds, or accepting the award via electronic means. The Notice of Award will include specific instructions on how to request payment. If applicable, the instructions will detail any additional information/forms required and where to submit payment requests.

Awarded grant funds must be expended in a timely manner or returned for reallocation through the next grant award cycle. The maximum period of performance (PoP) for a grant awarded through this notice is three years from the effective date established at the time of grant approval or the date of award obligation, whichever is earlier. If an approved grant award will not be

completed within the PoP, the State may request a one-time extension of up to 12 months with appropriate justification. Any awarded grant project that will not be completed, and from which funds are deobligated, may be eligible for funding in future competitions. These projects will not be provided any preferential treatment and will be assessed along with all other applications submitted in response to the current Funding Opportunity based solely on the merits of the project.

FWS may publish one or more media releases and post information about projects selected for funding FWS websites. These releases may be made in coordination with the Department of the Interior and may be made nationally and/or regionally.

POST AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

Administration and National Policy Requirements

For award administration and national policy requirements, see the [DOI General Terms and Conditions](#). Infrastructure projects require the use of American iron, steel, manufacture products, and construction materials per [2 CFR 184](#).

See the [FWS General Award Terms and Conditions](#) for national policy requirements for FWS awards. Special terms and conditions will be detailed in award notices.

Reporting

The recipient's Notice of Award will detail all reporting requirements, including frequency, due dates, and instructions for requesting extensions. In general, but not limited to, recipients must:

- Submit Federal Financial reports and Program Performance reports.
- Use the [Federal Financial Report \(SF-425\) form](#) for financial reporting,
- Monitor award activities and report on program performance per [2 CFR 200.329](#),
- Promptly notify the awarding program in writing of any issues, delays, or conditions impairing award objectives per [2 CFR 200.329\(e\)](#),
- Disclose any conflicts of interest related to their award that arise during the award period per [2 CFR 1402.112](#),
- Report on the status of real property acquired under the award in which the Federal government retains an interest per [2 CFR 200.330](#), and
- Report all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award per [2 CFR 200.113](#).
- Report any matters related to recipient integrity and performance to SAM.gov per [Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200](#).
- If the Federal share of the award is more than \$100,000 and the recipient makes or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection to the award, disclose those activities using the Disclosure of Lobbying (SF-LLL) form per [43 CFR 18.100](#).
- Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA) requires certain recipients to report information on executive compensation through SAM.gov and information on all sub-awards, subcontracts, and consortiums over \$30,000 to the [FFATA Subaward Reporting System \(FSRS\)](#).

Other Information